

Expanding transit service in King County

In November 2006, King County voters passed *Transit Now*, a ballot measure proposed by King County Executive Ron Sims to expand Metro Transit service by 15 to 20 percent over the next decade.

The first improvements were rolled out as part of the February 2007 service change, with 16,000 annual service hours added to 10 existing bus routes. More new hours were scheduled for the June and September service changes, for a total increase of 37,000 annual service hours in the first year of *Transit Now*.

Longer-range improvements will include the creation of new bus rapid transit service in five busy corridors, more bus service on high-ridership routes and in growing residential areas, and improvements to Metro's existing Rideshare and paratransit services. To support this increased service, Metro will add new buses to its fleet and replace aging buses over the next 10 years. Many of the new buses will be hybrid diesel-electric coaches with air conditioning, security cameras, "SmartCard" fareboxes, and the latest communication systems.

Why expand Metro service

The county's need for transit service is growing along with its population and economy. Over the next 10 years, the county is expected to add 250,000 new jobs and welcome more than 150,000 new residents. Without increases in transit, this growth would add significantly to the traffic congestion we already face.

Increasing the use of transit will also help King County combat global warming and support livable, healthy communities. Metro's increasing use of green vehicles such as electric trolley and hybrid diesel-electric buses, and cleaner-burning fuels such as biodiesel and Ultra Low Sulfur diesel, add to the environmental advantage of combining many riders in a single vehicle. Metro's wide range of transportation alternatives, including vanpools, carpools, and Access paratransit—and its support of choices such as shared cars, biking and walking—make transit a powerful tool to help reduce pollution and support active, healthy lifestyles.

Transit Now funding

The service improvements under *Transit Now* are being funded through a one-tenth of one percent increase in the sales tax in King County. This increase is expected to cost the average household in King County an estimated \$25 in 2007.

We'll Get You There

Metro offers a variety of transportation options and supports alternatives such as bike riding and the water taxi across Elliott Bay. Having choices helps you get where you need to go in a way that best fits your lifestyle—and that's good for everyone. For more information, visit Metro Online (<http://transit.metrokc.gov/>) and follow the link to "Travel Options" or call one of the numbers listed below.

Rider Information: 206-553-3000

- Bus schedules, routes, and trip planning
- Park-and-Rides
- Bike facilities
- Water Taxi

Rideshare: 206-625-4500

- Carpool
- Ridematch
- VanPool
- VanShare

Accessible Services:

206-263-3113

Transit Now service improvements

The new service will be concentrated in five key areas:

- 1 Bringing new bus rapid transit service, under the name **RapidRide**, to five busy corridors;
- 2 Offering more all-day, two-way service to high-ridership routes that connect residential, business, and recreational centers;
- 3 Providing new bus service for growing residential areas;
- 4 Forming partnerships with major employers and cities to add new service in rapidly expanding employment centers; and
- 5 Additional improvements such as expanded ride-share and paratransit services in King County.

1 RapidRide

Under *Transit Now*, Metro is developing RapidRide, a bus rapid transit service that will provide frequent, fast, and reliable bus service in certain major arterial corridors. New buses, upgraded passenger waiting areas, synchronized traffic signals, and real-time bus arrival signs are just some of the features that will distinguish this service in the following five corridors:

The hallmarks of RapidRide service

At full implementation, RapidRide will feature:

- Frequent, all-day service: a target of every 10 minutes most of the time and at least every 15 minutes during non-peak hours;
- Transit stations at high-ridership and high-transfer locations with real-time bus arrival signs and enhanced shelters; and
- High-capacity, low-emission hybrid buses with low floors designed for fast boarding and rider comfort.

- **Aurora RapidRide** — Aurora Avenue N (SR 99) between Shoreline and downtown Seattle
 - **Ballard/Uptown RapidRide** — Ballard to downtown Seattle along 15th Avenue NW and W Mercer Place
 - **Bel-Red RapidRide** — Bellevue to Redmond on NE Eighth Street and 156th Avenue NE via Crossroads and Overlake
 - **Pacific Highway South RapidRide** — SeaTac to Federal Way on Pacific Highway S (SR 99)
 - **West Seattle RapidRide** — West Seattle to downtown Seattle using the downtown Seattle transit tunnel or Third Avenue
- Metro estimates the cost of implementing RapidRide at approximately \$160 million, including roadway improvements, passenger facilities and amenities, and new buses. This funding will be secured through a combination of the *Transit Now* sales tax increase and support from federal and state grants.

What's happening now

Metro's current work on RapidRide includes:

- Working with cities to define the service routing and roadway

improvements to be provided in each of the five corridors;

- Taking inventory of existing transit service in those corridors, including bus stop locations and the speed and reliability of existing transit service;
- Doing traffic studies in the affected areas;
- Working with consultants and customer focus groups to design the passenger amenities and other features of RapidRide vehicles and facilities; and
- Forming community advisory committees in preparation for public outreach in early 2008.

2 More service for high-ridership routes

With *Transit Now* funding, Metro will enhance existing service to produce a network of core high-ridership routes with all-day, two-way bus service connecting residential, business, and recreational centers throughout the county. The target frequency for service on these routes is every 15 minutes, seven days a week. Ridership studies show that when passengers can count on service being available at all times of day, even commuter ridership increases.

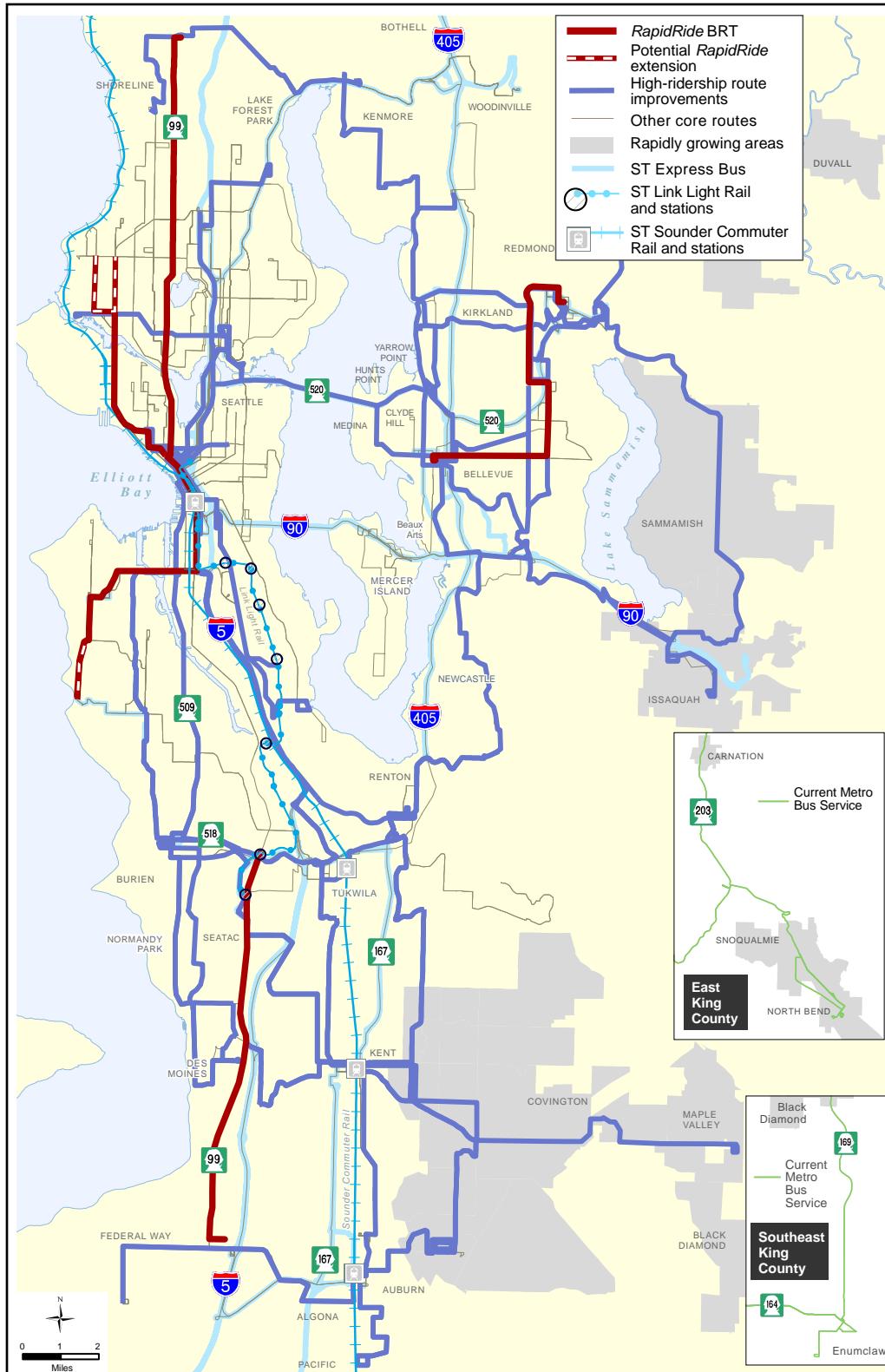
The service improvements designed to create this network will be tailored to specific needs in specific areas.

What's happening now

By the end of 2007, Metro will have increased service in 13 of the 30 high-ridership corridors identified for improvements under *Transit Now*. The earliest improvements

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This map, based on Metro Transit's analysis of current ridership and future population and employment trends, illustrates how service improvements from *Transit Now* will be spread throughout the region. Exactly when improvements will be made along which corridors will be decided only after a thorough process combining research, analysis, and extensive public outreach for major route changes.



RapidRide BRT:

- Aurora RapidRide
- Ballard/Uptown RapidRide
- Bel-Red RapidRide
- Pacific Highway South RapidRide
- West Seattle RapidRide

High-ridership routes:

- Network of all-day central Eastside routes with 15-minute frequency
- South King County all-day 15-30-minute frequency route network
- Improved cross-town services within Seattle

Rapidly growing areas:

New peak service or addition of midday service to rapidly growing residential areas

Service partnerships:

Additional services to urban employment centers with high potential for matching resources

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all focused on increasing service during off-peak hours, and by mid-2008 some peak-hour improvements are scheduled to be made as well. Metro's first installment of 22 new hybrid diesel-electric buses, which will support further service increases, is scheduled to arrive in mid-2008.

3 New service for growing areas

The suburban areas of King County have grown rapidly in the past 20 years. With *Transit Now*, Metro will increase service to these growing residential areas by adding peak-hour-only service in some areas that currently have limited or no service and by adding midday service in some areas that currently have peak service only. Some of the areas in East and South King County that have been identified for possible new or expanded service include:

- Covington
- Duvall
- Issaquah
- Maple Valley
- Redmond Ridge
- Sammamish
- Snoqualmie

What's happening now

Metro will begin outreach later this year with elected officials and local jurisdictions to identify areas eligible for new service. Once the areas have been identified, Metro will work with communities to determine the specific services that will be implemented in those areas using a yet-to-be-adopted phasing plan for service startup.

4 Service partnerships

Transit Now sets aside resources for partnerships with major employers

and cities, potentially leveraging millions in additional funding from other sources to add new service in rapidly expanding employment centers.

What's happening now

The first service partnership with Children's Hospital and Regional Medical Center has been approved to begin in fall 2007, adding 63 new trips on existing Metro routes 25 and 75. The King County Council has approved a set of priority criteria for selecting partnership proposals, along with a process and schedule for seeking future partners. A Call for Projects will be issued in mid-2007 for projects to begin in 2008 and beyond.

5 Additional improvements

In addition to the four key improvement areas described above, *Transit Now* includes funding to improve Metro's non fixed-route services by the following means:

- For users with disabilities who are not served by the Access paratransit program, provide service through the Community Access Transportation Program;
- For non-disabled users outside Metro's fixed-route coverage area, make enhancements that double participation in the VanPool, VanShare, and ride-match programs; and
- Within Metro's fixed-route coverage areas, improve non-motorized access to transit.

What's happening now

Expansion of Access paratransit service into some areas that are not currently served is scheduled

to begin in September 2007, and planning is underway for bus stop enhancements that will allow more seniors and riders with disabilities to use regular bus service.

Outreach is being conducted to promote Metro's vanpool and vanshare services and RideshareOnline to smaller employers in King County.

Metro's fleet is being equipped with three-bike racks to replace the two-bike racks on all buses. In 2007, all buses serving State Route 520 will have the new racks, with the remainder of the fleet to be equipped by the end of 2008.

Schedule

The *Transit Now* ordinance (#15582) specifies that the funded service improvements are to be brought on line over the next 10 years. The first of these improvements were made in February 2007, with more scheduled for June and September. A phasing and implementation plan for the remaining improvements will be established as Metro updates its Six-Year Transit Development Plan in 2007.

Contact us

You can learn more about *Transit Now* by visiting King County's Web site at www.metrokc.gov/kcdot/transitnow.

If you have questions or comments about *Transit Now*, please call the Metro Transit message line at 206-684-1146.

Alternate Formats Available

206-263-6482 TTY Relay: 711